



PRESS RELEASE

Ministerial Conference on Science and Technology

To Increase Agricultural Productivity

San José, Costa Rica, May 10-11, 2004

Ministerial Conference on Science and Technology To Increase Agricultural Productivity

The Conference will take place on May 10-11, 2004.

Costa Rica, April, 2004. The Ministers of Agriculture and top officials in the areas of science and technology from Mexico, the Central American countries, Dominican Republic and the United States will meet in Costa Rica on May 10-11 to participate in the Ministerial Conference on Science and Technology to Increase Agricultural Productivity.

Nearly 200 people are expected to attend, including representatives from private industry, academia, NGOs, and regional and international organizations.

The Conference will take place at the Headquarters of the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA). The opening plenary will be addressed by His Excellency Abel Pacheco de La Espriella, President of Costa Rica. The U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Ann M. Veneman will head the delegation of her country.

Conference objectives include:

- To improve food security through the application of science and technology to bolster agricultural productivity in an environmentally sustainable way,
- To strengthen knowledge of policy, regulatory, and institutional frameworks that facilitate technology transfer and indigenous research and development,
- To promote understanding of a broad range of conventional and state-of-the-art technologies, including biotechnology, that can boost productivity and international competitiveness, and that are appropriate for the region,
- To explore ways to forge public-private partnerships to improve technology transfer, market infrastructure, trade, and agribusiness linkages, and
- To promote a regional system of cooperation for research and development in agricultural science and technology.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), Costa Rica's Ministries of Agriculture and of Science and Technology, the U.S. Department of State, the U.S. Agency for International



Development (USAID), and the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA) are co-hosting the Conference.

The event is a follow-up to the “*Ministerial Conference and Expo on Agricultural Science and Technology*,” which was hosted by USDA Secretary Ann M. Veneman in California in June 2003 and attended by 119 ministerial-level participants from 117 nations. The world dialogue that was launched on that occasion will be furthered at the regional level through Ministerial Conferences such as the one to be held this May in Costa Rica.

Preliminary Program

Monday, May 10

Opening Plenary

Joint Session 1: The Role of Science and Technology in Economic Growth in the Rural Sector

Breakout Session 1A: Raising Agricultural Productivity in Central America through the Adoption of Conventional and Emerging Technologies-

- *Conventional and Emerging Technologies and their Application*
- *Increasing Competitiveness through Information and Management Technologies*
- *Technologies to Conserve Natural Resources and Mitigate Environmental Impacts*

Breakout Session 1B: Utilizing Biotechnology to Increase Agricultural Productivity

- *The Potential for Biotechnology in Central America*
- *Policy Frameworks to Foster Biotechnology*
- *Distribution of the Benefits of Biotechnology*

Joint Session 2: Policies and Institutions to Increase Access to Science and Technology

Breakout Session 2A: Policies and Institutions To Promote Technology Development

- *Private Sector Perspectives*
- *The Role of International Organizations*
- *The Role of National Institutions*

Breakout Session 2B: Mechanisms to Improve Technology Dissemination

- *Public Sector Models for Extension and Technical Assistance*
- *New Private Sector Initiatives for Technology Transfer*
- *Participatory Research: A New Approach to Innovation*

Tuesday, May 11

Joint Session 3: Toward an Integrated Regional Innovation System

Breakout Session 3A: Regional Priorities for Agricultural R&D in Central America

- *New Directions for R&D in the Region*
- *Producer Perspectives*
- *A Model for R&D Integration*

Breakout Session 3B: New Developments in S&T Funding: Lessons Learned and Future Perspectives

- *Improving Access to S&T Funding*
- *Multilateral Support to S&T*
- *Foundations as a Source of S&T Funding*

Closing Plenary: Conclusions and Recommendations